

PCRC WORKING PAPER SERIES



18th PCRC International Law Seminar
“Russia's Arctic Strategies : the Prospects for International Cooperation”
March 05, 2020

PCRC Working Paper No. 13 (May, 2020)

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Introduction

Russia's policies towards and within the Arctic Council (AC) is not very popular theme in the world scholarship. Some analysts believe that Russia was included into the Council as a full-fledged member simply because of its formal status of a coastal Arctic state but, in practical terms, it was of little use because of its economic and technological backwardness and poor financial resources (especially in the 1990s and early 2000s) (Chater 2017: 81; English 2013: 108). This group of experts suspected that Moscow joined the AC in a hope to get additional channels of assistance to the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF), rather than to contribute to solving problems and further development of the entire Arctic region. Other group of Western specialists criticized Russia for its passive/reactive rather than proactive policies within the Council and its units, the lack of initiatives and fresh ideas (Kankaanpää 2012: 95, 102; Nord 2017: 33; Thiele 2018). The Western authors were especially critical of Russia for temporary

suspension of its only indigenous peoples' organization represented in the AC (RAIPON) which heavily criticized Moscow for ignoring aboriginal ethnic groups' problems in the AZRF (Digges 2012; Nord 2016: 86; Rohr 2014; Wallace 2013). With the start of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 and imposition of Western sanctions on Russia, many experts questioned Moscow's willingness to cooperate in the AC framework and the Council's ability to remain an effective regional cooperative platform (Borgerson and Byers 2016; Exner-Pirot 2015a and 2015b; Huebert 2014; Klimenko 2015). Very few foreign scholars viewed any positive dynamics in Russia's AC policies over the last quarter of the century (Chater 2016; Graczyk and Koivurova 2015).

For natural reasons, the Russian discourse on Moscow's relations with the AC is much richer than the foreign one and Russian authors are more sympathetic with the Kremlin's policies on and within the Council. One group of Russian scholars studied the AC's history and its role in Arctic politics (Gavrilov 2017; Lyapchev 2016; Mikhailova and Mikhailov 2014; Sakharov 2015; Tikhonov 2018; Voronchikhina 2019; Voronkov 2014; Voronkov and Smirnova 2017). Another group of authors examined the AC's relations with other regional and global institutions dealing with the High North (Gavrilov 2017; Vasiliev 2016; Voronkov and Smirnova 2017). Some Russian analysts reflected on the future of the Council, including its potential transformation into a full-fledged international organization (Tikhonov 2018; Voronkov 2014; Voronkov and Smirnova 2017; Zhuravel' 2020). Finally, some experts critically examined Russian policies within the AC by identifying success stories and failures of Moscow's diplomacy in this area (Mikhailova and Mikhailov 2014; Tikhonov 2018; Sakharov 2015; Voronchikhina 2019; Zagorsky 2015; Zhuravel' 2020).

Based on the past research, I set myself two main research objectives: First, to examine Russia's policies towards and within the AC since emergence of this intergovernmental forum. Second, to discuss Moscow's possible agenda during a forthcoming Russian AC presidency in 2021-2023.

Present at creation: Russia and the birth of the Arctic Council

In contrast with Russo-skeptics who deny any significant role of Russia in the creation and further development of the AC, it was Moscow who was one of the key players launched the whole process. It is well-known that the establishment of the AC was preceded by the so-called Rovaniemi process. As Graczyk and Koivurova (2015: 299)

rightly note, this process was inspired by the speech given by Soviet Secretary-General Mikhail Gorbachev on 1 October 1987 in Murmansk, in which he outlined a proposal for transforming the Arctic into a ‘zone of peace’ (Gorbachev 1987). This concept, which became known as the Murmansk Initiative, comprised arrangements such as a nuclear-free zone in northern Europe, restraints on naval activity in the seas contiguous to the shores of northern Europe, utilization of Arctic resources based on peaceful cooperation, further scientific research on the region, cooperation on environmental protection among the northern nations, and opening the Northern Sea Route (NSR) to icebreaker-escorted shipping. Although most of these ideas proved premature, at least two of them elicited response: promoting international scientific study on the Arctic, and cooperation on environmental protection. The former led to the establishment of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) in 1990; the latter laid the foundations for intergovernmental cooperation on the Arctic issues.

Soon after the Murmansk speech, two initiatives for enhanced intergovernmental cooperation on Arctic affairs were put forward by Finland and Canada. These concepts differed in terms of scope and content of cooperation, but had the same goals – to institutionalize Arctic cooperation and to involve the USSR in this structure. The essential idea behind the Finnish initiative was to create a mechanism that would help the northern countries to start cooperation in the area where these countries shared the same concerns, namely, the Arctic environment.

While Finland was developing its initiative and making preparatory arrangements, Canada suggested a much more radical idea of establishing an ‘Arctic Council’. It was first mentioned by Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney during his visit to Leningrad in November 1989, and was officially announced by Canada’s Secretary of State for External Affairs in November 1990 (English 2013: 158–159; Graczyk and Koivurova 2015: 301). The proposal viewed an Arctic Council as an international organization with significant powers, including the ability to enact binding agreements and a mandate covering almost the entire range of relations in the region, including security. In fact, Ottawa suggested establishing a regional analogy of the Conference (later Organization) on Security and Cooperation in Europe which was viewed by many Arctic states as a too radical project.

Upon some discussions and consultations, the Arctic states, including the USSR, favored the Finnish initiative. The Rovaniemi process was initially a series of meetings between

the representatives of the eight Arctic countries, initiated by the Government of Finland. At the first meeting, held in September 1989 in Rovaniemi (Finland), the participants discussed the ecological challenges and possible joint actions to address them, agreeing to start preparatory work for the ministerial meeting of circumpolar states. This work resulted in the adoption, in July 1991, of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) prepared jointly by the representatives of the Arctic countries (with the USSR's active participation) and a wide range of observers (both state and non-state actors, such as international organizations and NGOs) (Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, 1991).

This document provided for the expansion of cooperation in the field of Arctic research, environmental monitoring, assessment of human impact in the region, and the implementation of measures to control and reduce emissions of major pollutants. AEPS not only set primary directions for cooperation between the countries in the region, but also laid the foundation for the institutionalization of a multilateral cooperation mechanism. The Strategy made provisions for the establishment of multiple mechanisms, such as Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP), Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group (EPPR), all of which were later transformed into the AC working groups.

The AEPS structures produced significant scientific results and substantially increased awareness of northern nations about Arctic problems. Nevertheless, it soon became apparent that there was a compelling need for coordination, supervision and communication between working groups and governments, as well as routine preparation of ministerial meetings. To bridge this management gap, the Arctic states decided to create a group of Senior Arctic Affairs Officials (SAAOs), which, however, had no formal mandate stemming from the Rovaniemi Declaration or AEPS. Moreover, the Rovaniemi process expanded the scope of its activities by including not only environmental issues but also sustainable development and indigenous peoples problematique, the trend which was actively supported by Russia who became a legal successor of the Soviet Union after its collapse in late 1991.

By the mid-1990s, it became clear that the AEPS needs further institutionalization and transformation into a different type of institution. The only state opposing the creation of a new institution was the U.S. which did not ratify the 1982 UN Convention on the Law

of the Sea (UNCLOS) and preferred to have free hands in the Arctic. Only with coming of the Clinton administration into power, which favored multilateral diplomacy and institutions, the U.S. position changed and Washington agreed to establish a new institution.

The AC itself was established in September 1996 with the signing of the Ottawa Declaration as a high level intergovernmental forum to facilitate cooperation, coordinated action and interaction among Arctic states, involving indigenous communities and other inhabitants of the Arctic to address common problems of the region, especially in the field of sustainable development and environmental protection.

The AC has been developing its institutional structure since its very inception. The Ottawa Declaration (Arctic Council, 1996) stipulated the main parameters of the forum's functioning, defining biennial cycle of presidencies of the participating countries, outlining the range of organizations – permanent participants of the forum, and approving the consensus-based decision-making process. The document also emphasized the continuity of the AC and the structures established under the AEPS. In addition to the established working groups, Indigenous Peoples Secretariat (IPS) became a permanent fixture in the Council's structure.

The initial priority was to establish the AC as a full-fledged successor to the AEPS. The Joint Communique of Governments of Arctic States on the Establishment of the Arctic Council put forward three primary objectives: development and adoption of the rules of procedure for the Council, definition of its mandate and effective transition of the AEPS into the AC.

The Arctic Council's development: an early phase (1996-2004)

To evaluate the activity of an AC member-state the Canadian scholar Andrew Chater and Russian researcher Darya Voronchikhina suggested several criteria. Chater (2015) identified four parameters: (1) a number of comments made by each state delegation at the Council's meetings for a certain period; (2) a number of agenda items that each state delegation provided comments on for a certain period; (3) the average size of state delegations at the Council's meetings for a certain period, and (4) a number of projects sponsored by each AC member-state.

Voronchikhina (2019) suggested a slightly different set of criteria: (1) a number of delegates from the Arctic countries to participate in the Council's meetings; (2) a number of projects funded by the Council member countries; (3) a number of projects initiated by specific AC member state, and (4) a number of comments made by the representatives of a member state at the Council's meetings for a certain period.

Since Voronchikhina's indicators reflect all substantial aspects of AC member states' activities and, in addition, her data is more representative than Chater's one (he selected data only for the periods of 1998–2000, 2007–2009 and 2013–2015, by the way, missing the period of Russia's first chairmanship in 2004-2006), I prefer Voronchikhina's methodology.

The early period of the AC's development included the Canadian (1996-1998), U.S. (1998-2000), Finnish (2000-2002) and Icelandic (2002-2004) presidencies. It is impossible use properly the above quantitative indicators to assess Russia's activities in the AC during the first, Canadian, presidency (1996-1998) because during this period the Council and its units had no systematic records and data on the AC activities is rather fragmentary and incomplete. However, it is well-known that Russia has considerably contributed to developing rules of procedure and mandates for the Council's various organs, as well as incorporating the work of the AEPS into the Council. It is also known that Russia supported financially two projects initiated by the AC, particularly, in the context of the EPPR working group (Senior Arctic Officials 1998; Voronchikhina 2019: 311). Moscow also initiated one project during the Canadian presidency (Senior Arctic Officials 1998; Voronchikhina 2019: 314) (see also tables 3 and 4).

As far as the U.S., Finnish and Icelandic presidencies are concerned Russian activities in the AC can be measured much more adequately than during the Canadian chairmanship because reliable data are available. Russia's participation in various Council's meetings is comparable to other AC member states with exception of the American and Canadian delegations (see table 1). The average size of state delegations at the Council's meetings between 1998 and 2004 was as follows: U.S. – 20,0, Canada – 17,71, Finland - 8,28, Norway - 8,14, Denmark - 6,71, Russia - 4,14, Iceland – 3,28, and Sweden – 3,14.

Russia made roughly the same number of comments in the AC meetings as other Arctic countries with exception of Norway and Canada who were more active (see table 2). This

was explained by Moscow's intention to actively participate in establishing the Council's rules, procedures and structures during its formative phase.

In 1998-2004, Russia sponsored 21 projects (see table 4) which is fewer than Canada, Norway and the United States initiated, but more than in the cases of Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden. It should be noted that Russia focused more on projects that benefited Russia directly, as opposed to projects with more international consequences. Russia's projects were mainly of ecological nature, such as projects on biodiversity and contaminants in the AZRF, as well as Russia's Arctic environmental protection.

The Council sponsored a variety of projects that benefited all of the Arctic countries, such as reindeer husbandry, Arctic shipping, telemedicine, climate change mitigation and forestry. However, Russia supported financially only five projects while other AC member states (even such small countries as Denmark and Iceland) had a more impressive record (see table 3). An exception is that Russia offered to chair the CAFF working group.

It should be also noted that Russia received money from other Arctic countries and international institutions to complete environmental projects in the AZRF. For example, Norway gave Russia money as part of its "regional program of action" on biodiversity (Chater 2015: 46). In 1999-2000, 100,000 USD donated by Norway to the IPS were used for improving living conditions of the indigenous peoples in the AZRF (Voronchikhina 2019: 312). The EU helped the Russian North-West through the Northern Dimension program (Joenniemi and Sergunin 2003) and Kolarctic cross-border cooperation (CBC) program (Kuznetsov and Sergunin 2019). The U.S. Russian Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (Nunn-Lugar) of 1991–2012 and the Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Program in the Russian Federation (2003) played a significant role in nuclear waste treatment on the Kola Peninsula (Konyshchev et al. 2017).

Behind the scenes, many Western policy makers and journalists doubted that Russia used the AC and other foreign funds for the intended purposes: allegations on corruption in Russia at all governmental levels – from the municipal to the federal ones – were quite widespread in the Western mass media (Chater 2015: 46).

But in general Russia was very supportive of the Council's activities, including the production of a path-breaking document - the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA 2004) by the end of the Icelandic presidency.

Russia's first presidency (2004-2006)

In 2004–2006, the Arctic Council was chaired by Russia. During this period, five SAO meetings were held. The presidency retained the key priorities of the forum – the fight against pollution, human capital development, climate change, as well as the preparation for the 2007–2008 International Polar Year (Arctic Council 2006).

During its presidency, Russia initiated 23 projects and financially supported six projects sponsored by other AC member states – more than other Arctic states (see tables 3 and 4).

The ministerial meeting in Salekhard, held on 26 October 2006, marked the tenth anniversary of the forum. The Salekhard Declaration, however, contained no groundbreaking and concrete commitments or decisions by the Arctic countries. The ministers once again expressed their commitment to the protection of the Arctic environment, noting the importance of the work under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In addition, by the Reykjavik meeting commitments regarding the ACIA recommendations were confirmed (Arctic Council 2006).

At the same time, the ministers expanded the agenda by discussing energy issues, stressing the importance of cooperation in this field. The SDWG was instructed to consider possible future initiatives in the field of energy cooperation in the Arctic.

Russia and the Arctic Council prior to the Ukrainian crisis (2007-2013)

The first Russian presidency was followed by three sequential Nordic chairmanships: the Norwegian (2007-2009), Danish (2009-2011) and Swedish (2011-2013) ones. These countries had a common view of the Arctic problems and the Council's role in regional politics. In fact, they formed a single AC agenda with a clear priority of the environmental problematique. Moscow supported Nordic initiatives in areas, such as climate change, biodiversity, human capital development, emergency response, ocean environment research, fight against pollutants, the implementation of joint monitoring programs, as well as the results and the legacy of the International Polar Year (Sakharov 2015: 45). In

turn, these countries took measures to continue Arctic energy cooperation initiated by Russia during its presidency.

Russia's participation in the Council further increased compared to the previous era. Russia participated in Council meetings more than any other country, making more comments (54 ones in 2007-2013) and speaking on a wide variety of Council agenda items. Russia's average delegation size was 7,14 similar to those of Denmark (8,71) and Sweden (8,0) (although these countries chaired the AC in this period), more than the Finnish (4,14) and Icelandic (2,14) representation, yet less than the Norwegian (14,85), Canadian (11,28) and U.S. (10,0) ones (Voronchikhina 2019: 310). In 2006-2013, Russia sponsored 15 projects, more than four of the Nordic countries, but slightly less than Canada, the United States and Norway. In 2011, Russia contributed 10 million euro to the Council's Project Support Instrument as well as financially supported the AC's secretariat.

Russia played a decisive role in negotiating an Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR) in the Arctic (Arctic Council 2011a). The mandate for negotiations on the SAR Agreement was given by the 2009 Tromsø Declaration ending the Norwegian chairmanship, which established a task force to develop and complete negotiations on the legal instrument before the next ministerial meeting in 2011 (Arctic Council 2009: 5). The idea of such an agreement was not new, as Moscow had proposed it already in 2003 at the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and at the 2004 EPPR meeting in Murmansk (Arctic Council 2008; Veselov 2012: 55).

The proposal, which was more sweeping than the 2011 document, did not gain support from the U.S. and Sweden (Veselov 2012: 55). Later, the idea returned when one of the Council's working groups – PAME – had completed a comprehensive Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment, intended as the main deliverable to the Tromsø ministerial meeting. The study contained seventeen specific policy recommendations for the Arctic Council to take action to ensure safe and environmentally sustainable transport in the region – and working towards a SAR agreement was one of them. At the November 2008 SAO meeting in Kautokeino, Norway, the USA proposed a Memorandum of Understanding on SAR (Arctic Council 2008: 6). Under the circumstances, the Arctic states agreed to make it an endeavor under AC auspices, endorsed by the 2009 Tromsø Declaration, which established a task force co-chaired by U.S. Ambassador David Balton and Russian SAO Anton Vasiliev.

The negotiation process embraced five rounds: in Washington (December 2009), in Moscow (February 2010), in Oslo (June 2010), in Helsinki (October 2010) and in Reykjavik (December 2010). The SAR Agreement was preceded by bilateral agreements between Russia and Norway, and Russia and the USA. Moreover, Russia, the USA and Canada considered concluding a trilateral SAR agreement, but the negotiations, first led by the military and then taken over by civil ministries, were suspended (Veselov 2012: 55). Finally, the SAR agreement was signed at the 2011 Nuuk ministerial meeting (Arctic Council 2011a).

Obviously, being satisfied with the results produced by the SAR agreement negotiating process, the Arctic states decided to sustain and further advance the formula. At the same ministerial meeting in Nuuk, the AC established another task force, to negotiate an Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response (MOPPR) in the Arctic. This time the task force was co-chaired by the two Russian and U.S. ambassadors who had led the SAR Agreement negotiations, as well as the Norwegian SAO Karsten Klepsvik.

The parties met five times to complete the negotiations: in Oslo, St Petersburg, Alaska, Helsinki (June 2012) and Reykjavik (October 2012) (Vasiliev 2013a: 55). Besides the representatives of the eight Arctic states, an AC observer – the WWF – also took part in the negotiations as an invited expert (Vasiliev 2013a: 54). However, other observers could not participate in the task force's proceedings, as during the previous bargaining process on the SAR Agreement (Graczyk 2011: 612).

The MOPPR agreement was signed at the 2013 Kiruna ministerial meeting which concluded the Swedish presidency. A new feature of the MOPPR Agreement are the Operational Guidelines prepared by EPPR. To ensure flexibility and a simpler updating procedure, the appendix has been made non-binding (Vasiliev 2013a: 57). Like its predecessor, the MOPPR agreement was aimed at strengthening 'cooperation, coordination and mutual assistance in emergency preparedness and response to marine oil spills' (Arctic Council 2013a, Art. 1). It also adds region-specific measures to the international conventions in which it is embedded, though to a lesser extent than with the SAR agreement. The rationale behind the MOPPR agreement has been to establish and make operational national response systems that would be compatible and able to react collaboratively in cases of oil pollution (Arctic Council 2013a, Art. 4(1)). It provides for

monitoring, notification and reimbursement procedures as well as a problem resolution mechanism in the form of regular meetings of the parties. Important to note is that these meetings also may be held within the framework of the AC (Vasiliev 2013a: 57). This demonstrates how new roles are being assigned to the forum by the Arctic states and the Council's relation to the agreement, further anchoring it in the broader system of international conventions and regimes.

Particularly important is the definition of the geographical scope of the MOPPR agreement. Unlike the SAR agreement, it relates to the national jurisdictions and continental shelves of the Arctic states – without precluding cooperation in the high seas of the Arctic Ocean, according to the 'polluter pays' principle (Vasiliev 2013a: 57). The message conveyed by this approach indicated that the Arctic states saw themselves as stewards, accepting full responsibility for the region (Robert 2012).

Even though these documents have not made any substantial difference, by placing the AC in the centre of both negotiation processes they have significantly raised its profile in Arctic governance system. Perhaps it is even better described as the 'Arctic Council System' – a term coined by Erik Molenaar (2012) – which encompasses the Council itself, and agreements conceived under its auspices. 'Under its auspices' means here that the Council was utilized as a venue for negotiations, the negotiating task forces were established by AC ministerial declarations and co-chaired by SAOs, and, finally, both agreements were signed on the occasions of AC ministerial meetings. To some extent, the Arctic Council System concept resembles that of the emerging Arctic regime or governance complex, which is more comprehensive (including a set of issue-area regimes), but still envisions the central role for the AC.

Although the agreements have not changed the nature of Arctic governance, they have introduced a new quality to the Council's role and capacity for addressing most important regional issues. Moreover, the Arctic states have demonstrated an innovative and creative approach to limitations imposed by themselves on the Council: despite being a soft-law institution, the AC has come to play an increasingly important role in regulating human activities in the Arctic.

Finally, both the SAR and MOPPR agreements embody good cooperation between Russia and the USA, which played the key role in launching both processes and co-chaired the task forces (with the participation of Norway in the case of the MOPPR agreement). For

Moscow, the agreements are part of a bigger plan for completion of its megaproject adopted by the AC, ‘Development of Safety Systems for the Implementation of Economic and Infrastructural Projects in the Arctic’, which is being introduced piecemeal (Vasiliev 2013a: 56).

One more initiative that expanded the traditional AC activities are the meetings of High Representatives of the Council member states, organized by Russia’s Security Council every year since 2011. The first gathering was held in Murmansk aboard the nuclear icebreaker Yamal, followed in 2012 by a meeting in Franz Josef Land (Patrushev 2013: 46). Representatives of the AC member states ‘responsible for security matters’ met for the third time in April 2013 in Salekhard to discuss issues related to circumpolar cooperation on emergency prevention, navigation and environmental security of the NSR, Arctic resource development and protection of Arctic ecosystems (Patrushev 2013: 46). According to Nikolay Patrushev, Secretary of the Russian Security Council, these meetings ‘rightfully play an important role in expanding and strengthening international Arctic cooperation’ and that ‘during the three-day work we [the Arctic states] were able to further strengthen mutual confidence and make that another step towards establishing the international Arctic security system’ (Patrushev 2013: 45–46). This shows how the AC now provides a framework for greater cooperation, also beyond the confines of its mandate, which can touch on matters that were carefully avoided earlier. Furthermore, it seems that it has become more conceivable to the Arctic states to connect the Council with military security issues, and to develop innovative formulas for dealing with these issues outside the forum proper but to some extent directed and influenced by it.

Along with the above activities, Russia supported various Nordic presidencies’ initiatives, such as the official launch of the task force on short-lived climate forcers (SLCF), the establishment of an expert group on ecosystem management, the scientific cooperation task force (SCTF) and the task force to facilitate the Circumpolar Business Forum.

Moscow also supported some important institutional changes, such as, for example, the creation of a Permanent Secretariat in the Norwegian city of Tromsø. This decision was taken during the Danish presidency (at the 2011 Nuuk ministerial meeting) but it was implemented during the Swedish one (2013-2015). The scope of responsibilities of the Permanent Secretariat of the Council was set in the Terms of Reference of the AC Secretariat, adopted at the deputy ministers meeting on 15 May 2012 in Stockholm

(Arctic Council 2012). The document was developed by the Task Force on Institutional Issues, created specifically for the implementation of the decisions of the Nuuk meeting.

Also, Moscow was actively involved in setting of criteria for observer countries which were established in the 2011 SAO report to the ministers. In particular, the observer countries were required to recognize sovereign rights of the Arctic states in the region, support the objectives of the Council, and be able to support AC regional initiatives (Arctic Council 2011b). The immediate result of this decision was granting the status of permanent observers to six countries (China, India, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea) at the 2013 Kiruna meeting which finalized the Swedish chairmanship.

Russia has also contributed to the production of the first AC's strategic document - Vision for the Arctic, which was adopted at the 2013 Kiruna ministerial meeting. The document called for a sustainable development of the region and prioritized economic and environmental cooperation between the Arctic and non-Arctic countries (Arctic Council 2013b). At the same time, it also announced exclusive decision-making rights of the AC eight member states. Among other things, this statement was obviously intended as a response to those concerned with the growing influence of non-Arctic states in the High North.

It should be noted that even before the start of the Ukrainian crisis, there were some tensions between Russia and other AC member states and permanent participants. The main source of tensions was Moscow's conflict with its only all-national indigenous peoples' organization, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and Far East (RAIPON). In 2012, the Russian Ministry of Justice required from RAIPON to re-register in accordance with a new legislation on NGOs (Sergunin and Konyshov 2016: 31-32). The Ministry's decision was made a month after RAIPON submitted a report to the UN Human Rights Council in which it criticized the Russian authorities for their disregard of the rights and problems of indigenous peoples. In fact, RAIPON was temporarily shut down and for this reason was unable to participate in the AC activities in late 2012-early 2013. The Council issued a statement supporting RAIPON in November 2012 (ironically, signed by the Russian SAO Anton Vasiliev present, as well).

RAIPON received the permission to continue its activities only in mid-March, 2013, when it was 'properly' registered. Two weeks later, at the 7th RAIPON Congress, the Association's previous 'too independent' leadership was replaced by the loyal one and

the organization was allowed to resume its participation in the AC activities. The Council's member states and permanent participants (especially indigenous peoples' organizations) remained highly critical of Moscow's policies on its aboriginal population of the High North (Rohr 2014).

“Bracketing out” Arctic cooperation from Russia's tensions with the West?

The Ukrainian and Syrian crises have negatively affected the Arctic cooperation in general and AC activities particularly. The U.S. and EU introduced economic sanctions against Russia, including some offshore energy projects in the AZRF. NATO stopped all military-to-military contacts. SAR exercises under the auspices of the AC and BEAC were suspended for a while. During the Canadian AC presidency, Canada and the U.S. skipped some working group and task force meetings in Russia, such as meetings in April 2014. The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov skipped a Council ministerial meeting in May 2015 in Iqaluit, Canada (the Russian delegation was led by Minister of Natural Resources and Environment) (Sergunin 2015). Canada then cancelled a planned AC event in Ottawa amid concerns that Russian officials would attend.

No surprise that Russian activities in the AC have significantly decreased. The average size of Russia's delegation during the Canadian presidency was reduced to 1,0 although other Arctic states also reduced their representation in the AC meetings as compared to the pre-crisis period: Canada (9,5), U.S. (7,0), Denmark (4,5), Norway (4,5), Sweden (3,0), Finland (2,5), and Iceland (2,0) (see table 1). For the same period, Russia made 11 comments which is comparable with the Danish (10) and U.S. (8) records while only Canada (30) and Norway (16) had better records. Finland (6), Sweden (5) and Iceland (1) were among the 'outsiders' (Chater 2016: 48).

At the same time, Russia was rather active in terms of initiation of AC projects. During the Canadian presidency, Russia sponsored 21 projects which is less than the U.S. (32), Canadian (29) and Norwegian (29) cases, but more than the Danish (11), Finnish (8), Swedish (5) and Icelandic (3) ones (Chater 2016: 48). It should be noted that most of Russia's projects were circumpolar in scope (although four were domestic in scope, focused on contaminants and shipping). Russia also sponsored projects in a wider range of areas, compared to its earlier interest in economic development. Russia rather effectively collaborated with the U.S. in the Council. For example, the U.S. sponsored two projects on environmental protection in the Russian Arctic. The U.S. and Russia co-

sponsored eight projects. Russia co-sponsored four projects with Canada despite Ottawa's most tough position on Moscow in the aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis.

The Council's role in regional governance continued to shift as policy-making continued during Canada's leadership. The Council did not create any formal agreements during Canada's turn as chair, seemingly indicating that the institution's policy-making role has diminished or paused. Instead, the Council created two less formal agreements. First, the Task Force on Arctic Marine Oil Pollution Prevention created an informal agreement, with its mandate to identify how best the AC can contribute to marine oil pollution prevention in the Arctic, recommend a concrete plan of action, and, as appropriate, develop cooperative arrangements to implement the Action Plan.

Russia and Norway co-chaired the task force. Through five meetings, states decided to create a "non-binding agreement." The Framework Plan for Cooperation on Prevention of Oil Pollution from Petroleum and Maritime Activities in the Marine Areas of the Arctic suggested that states agree to share information on efforts to reduce pollution, carry out assessments on marine pollution and develop common best practices to reduce pollution in a variety of areas (Chater 2017: 89-90).

In contrast with gloomy prognoses on the possible failure of the Canadian AC presidency, the 2015 Iqaluit ministerial meeting demonstrated that Ottawa's chairmanship was a rather productive one. For example, a key achievement during the Canadian presidency was the establishment of the Arctic Economic Council, a new independent forum of business representatives to facilitate Arctic business-to-business activities in the region. Other important achievements included:

- The publication of a compendium of best practices in promoting the traditional ways of life of Arctic indigenous peoples.
- Recommendations on how to better use traditional and local knowledge in the work of the Council to improve decision-making and research.
- The above-mentioned framework plan for cooperation on prevention of oil pollution from petroleum and maritime activities in the marine areas of the Arctic.
- The publication of a guide on how to respond to oil spills in snow and ice conditions in the Arctic.
- A collection of work related to short-lived climate pollutants that will lead to local health, economic and climate benefits.

- The publication of “Arctic Pollution Issues 2015: Summary for Policymakers,” which presents the conclusions and recommendations of three assessments on human health, trends in persistent organic pollutants and radioactivity in the Arctic.
- The development of the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan (2015-2025), which aims to provide a framework to protect Arctic marine and coastal ecosystems and to promote sustainable development in the region.
- Arctic biodiversity work, including an action plan to implement recommendations from the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment, and a detailed work plan to protect migratory birds along key international flight paths (Sergunin 2015).

Despite threats from Leona Aglukkak, the Canadian AC chair, to use the forum to censure Moscow over its involvement in Ukraine, criticism was made behind closed doors, not publicly. Moreover, Lavrov’s replacement in Iqaluit, Sergei Donskoi, the Russian natural resources and environment minister, also took a conciliatory line, reassuring the forum that stability and cooperation must remain a mainstay of the Council.

Other results from the Iqaluit meeting were less surprising and impressive. As was expected, the ministers agreed to defer decisions on pending observer applications and examine the roles and responsibilities of observers within the AC. There was widespread agreement by the Council that the observer system needed to be seriously revamped before more nations can be let in.

In the specific case of the EU, which also wanted its status in the AC upgraded and which was seen as a promising candidate for observer status, the decision was postponed because Canada and some indigenous peoples organizations were displeased with the European ban on seal products that Inuit hunters say was ruinous to local economies. Moscow joined the opposition to the EU observer application because of its dissatisfaction with sanctions imposed by Brussels in 2014-2015.

During the U.S. presidency (2015-2017), Russia preferred to keep a rather low profile in the AC. Its average delegation size was kept on the same level as under the Canadian chairmanship (1,0). It should be noted, however, that other AC member states were also relatively passive in terms of their representation in the Council’s meetings because the Arctic was not very high priority for Washington (especially under the Trump administration). Their average delegation size remained almost the same as under the

previous presidency: the U.S. (12,0), Canada (10,66), Denmark (8,33), Norway (7,0), Sweden (6,66), Finland (5,33), and Iceland (4,0) (see table 1).

However, Russia was a leader in terms of supporting Council-sponsored projects (6) while other countries (even the U.S. chaired the AC) were less active in this area: Canada, Norway and Sweden supported four projects each, while Denmark, Finland, Iceland and the U.S. funded only three projects each (see table 3). Moreover, Russia sponsored four more projects on a separate basis (see table 4).

Moscow supported the U.S. initiative to establish an Arctic Coast Guard Forum in October 2015. Now the ACGF operates as an independent, informal, operationally-driven organization, not bound by treaty, to foster safe, secure, and environmentally responsible maritime activity in the Arctic. All Arctic countries, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Island, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States are members of the forum. Chairmanship duties of the ACGF rotate every two years in concert with the AC Chairmanship.

Notably, the U.S. and Russia co-chaired the Scientific Cooperation Task Force, which in July 2016 agreed a text of a third legally-binding agreement negotiated under the auspices of the AC which was formally signed at the 2017 Fairbanks AC ministerial meeting (Arctic Council 2017). This development is particularly worth noting considering that the US co-chaired the SCTF along with Russia at the time of a general freeze in relations between the two countries following the start of the Ukrainian crisis. As Śmieszek and Koivurova note (2017: 17-18), despite very serious tensions between the former Cold War adversaries in other parts of the world and the sanctions imposed on Russia by all other AC member states, it was the policy of the U.S. during its AC chairmanship to diligently and consistently maintain the Council as a platform of dialogue, collaboration, and engagement with Russia.

The U.S. and Russia also initiated the discussion on the need to develop a long-term strategic plan for the Council, the idea which was endorsed by the SAOs at their meeting in October 2016. These discussions were continued under the Finnish (2017-2019) and Icelandic (2019-2021) chairmanships.

Russia supported major initiatives of the Finnish presidency. For example, Moscow prioritized the preservation of the Arctic's biodiversity, its unique and extremely vulnerable ecosystems, as well as prevention of sea and ground pollution and

improvement of practical cooperation among the Arctic states as regards joint response measures.

Russia favored expanding coast guard cooperation within the Arctic Forum framework. For example the Russian Coast Guard took an active part in the multilateral Polaris exercise staged in the Gulf of Bothnia in late March and early April 2019.

Russia also supported Finnish initiatives in areas, such as enhancing the region's resistance to global climate change, minimizing man-made environmental impacts, preserving biodiversity, developing the telecommunications infrastructure and expanding the cooperation with the Arctic Economic Council, which was seen as a promising venue for attracting investment and promoting business and innovation (Lavrov 2019).

Moscow supported Helsinki's efforts to make AC observers' activities more efficient and better integrated into the Council's activities. Along with other AC member states Russia welcomed the International Maritime Organization as a new observer. Moscow also approved the Finnish initiative to organize a separate session with observers as part of the 2018 Senior Officials Committee plenary meeting, where they presented measures undertaken to fight pollution in the Arctic and maintain its biodiversity (Lavrov 2019).

Both President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov expressed their support to the program of the Icelandic Chairmanship (2019-2021). They underlined that Russia has common interests with Iceland in the region, primarily in the sea, including the promotion of marine bio-economics and green shipping, mitigating marine refuse, including micro-plastics, as well as ocean acidification (International Arctic Forum 2019; Lavrov 2019).

Russian and international discourse on Russia's forthcoming AC Presidency (2021-2023)

The fact that the AC faced a series of challenges of both endogenous and exogenous character became obvious even before the Council's 20th anniversary. The internal challenges stemmed from the evolving and constantly growing workload of the Council, which led to problems with overlapping and prioritizing work across AC working groups and task forces, funding the ongoing projects and new initiatives, and, regarding the effective implementation of the AC recommendations by the member states (Supreme Audit Institutions of Denmark, Norway, The Russian Federation 2015).

As mentioned above some Russian and international experts (Exner-Pirot 2015a; Graczyk and Koivurova 2015; Klimenko 2015; Lyapchev 2016; Sakharov 2015; Śmieszek and Koivurova 2017: 17-18; Voronkov and Smirnova 2017; Zhuravel' 2020) believe that a remedy for internal AC problems could be a comprehensive vision of Arctic cooperation to guide the work of the Council and bring to it more continuity between rotating chairmanships. Moreover, such a vision – as well as establishing more stable financing mechanisms - could make the Council more secure in view of shifting political priorities and radical changes on Arctic states' domestic political scenes. The 2013 AC “Vision for the Arctic” pledged to “pursue opportunities to expand the Arctic Council’s roles from policy-shaping into policy-making” (Arctic Council 2013b). The statement missed, however, any further details and the debates for the prospects for the development of the AC’s long-term strategic plan still continue.

Russian and international experts point out that a new vision should better define position and role of the AC within the regional governance system. It appears that the Council is still not a principal venue for solving many important Arctic problems in areas such as shipping, fisheries, climate change or biodiversity (Exner-Pirot 2015a; Graczyk and Koivurova 2015; Klimenko 2015; Lyapchev 2016; Sakharov 2015; Śmieszek and Koivurova 2017: 20-21; Voronkov and Smirnova 2017; Zhuravel' 2020). For example, negotiations launched within the UN bodies in 2018 to develop an implementing agreement under the UNCLOS on conservation and the sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, if successfully completed, would be of major relevance to the Arctic Ocean. However, the AC and its relevant working groups do not participate in these negotiations. Another example is the 2018 agreement on the commercial fishery ban in the Central Arctic Ocean, where discussions were held within the extended Arctic Five including China, Iceland, the EU, Japan and South-Korea, but not in the AC framework (Sergunin 2019).

It should be noted that very important changes are happening in the Russian academic and formal/official thinking about the future of the AC, its functions and the role in the regional governance system. Prior to the Ukrainian crisis and the rise of tensions between Russia and the West Moscow’s official position and the Russian academic discourse favored transformation of the AC from the intergovernmental discussion forum to a full-fledged international organization (with formal charter, institutional structure and power to conclude binding agreements).

For example, in his 2013 article the then Russian ambassador for Arctic Affairs and SAO Anton Vasiliev noted: “In my view, we embarked on the path of turning the Arctic Council from a ‘forum’ into a full-fledged international organization, although we will move in this direction gradually, in stages, with full respect for the positions of all member states - after all, all decisions in the Council are taken by consensus» (Vasiliev 2013b: 101). At the 2013 Kiruna AC Ministerial Meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov noted that the Council is on the way to becoming a full-fledged international organization, referring to the fact that two binding agreements were concluded under its auspices (Lavrov 2013).

Many Russian experts on Arctic geopolitics, law, environment, economy and humanitarian issues also believed (and still believe) that the lack of formal status and proper legal powers is a serious hindrance to further development of the Council as a key structural element of the regional governance system (Bekyashev 2015; Inyakina 2019; Konyshev and Sergunin 2011; Levit 2014; Tikhonov 2018). In their view, the Council should be gradually, step by step, further institutionalized and finally transformed to a ‘normal’ international organization with a proper legal status.

However, with the outbreak of a ‘new Cold War’ in the East-West relations both the Kremlin and the Russian expert community serving the government realized that any plans to make the AC an intergovernmental international organization seem unrealistic. All Council member states introduced economic sanctions against Russia. Five Arctic countries, being NATO member states, cancelled military-to-military contacts with Russia, initiated military build-up in the North and increased their military activities, including land and sea military exercises, air and sea patrolling in the Arctic region and so on. Generally, mutual trust between Russia and the rest of the AC member states was significantly undermined. As mentioned above, the Russian activities in the Council’s framework decreased in the aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis. It took some time to identify some areas where cooperation between Moscow and other Arctic countries was still possible and delineate them from the conflictual issues.

For the above reasons, Russian diplomats and politicians stopped to speak about providing the AC with new legal powers and its transformation from a ‘discussion forum’ to a full-fledged international organization. For example, the 2016 Russian Foreign Policy Concept calls only for “strengthening interaction in the Arctic Council’s format” without

suggesting any institutional changes in the AC (Putin 2016). The new Russian Arctic strategy of 2020 favors “securing for the Arctic Council the role of a key regional institution coordinating international activities in the region” (Putin 2020) but again does not propose any modifications in its organization and functions. In his speech at the 2019 Rovaniemi AC ministerial meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov approved the initiatives, such as continuation of the Project Support Instrument, drafting an AC Strategic Action Plan, better coordination between different Council’s units and with other regional and subregional institutions but did not insist on providing the AC with new legal powers (Lavrov 2019).

There can be at least two explanations why Russian leaders changed their mind about the Council’s status. First, in the current – conflictual - situation it is unrealistic to expect that non-Russian AC member states (especially the U.S.) would agree to create a new full-fledged regional intergovernmental organization where Russia would have an equal standing with Western states. Second, as some Russian experts (Sboichakova 2016; Voronkov 2014; Voronkov and Smirnova 2017) believe, under the current circumstances, the AC, being an informal and flexible institution, can be more efficient and preferable cooperative platform that a formalized organization with rigid structure, rules and procedures. For example, as ‘classical’ international organizations (e.g. UN and OSCE) demonstrate, if there are antagonisms between member states in the turbulent times the whole work of these institutions can be blocked. In contrast with these ‘traditional’ institutions, the AC not only ‘survived’ the crisis in the Russian-Western relations but also made some progress in developing Arctic cooperation. Some Russian experts even called the AC a ‘new-type multilateral organization’ which is more powerful than just an intergovernmental forum but less institutionalized and formalized than ‘classical’ international organization (Voronkov 2014; Voronkov and Smirnova 2017).

One more important change in Russia’s perceptions of the Council’s future prospects relates to its role as a regional security provider. In the pre-Ukrainian era, both official Moscow and expert community believed that with time the AC should include the military security problematique to its mandate and become a sort of an Arctic OSCE (Konyshev and Sergunin 2011; Wilson 2016). However, for the same reasons as in the case of plans to turn the Council into an international organization, Moscow had to abandon the idea of including military security issues on the agenda of this forum. According to the present-day Russian assessments, the Council should retain its role as an international body dealing only with the soft security issues, such as socioeconomic problems, environment,

conservation of biodiversity, climate change mitigation, maritime safety, search and rescue operations, local communities, connectivity and social cohesiveness of Arctic regions, Arctic research, etc. (Lyapchev 2016; Sboichakova 2016; Voronchikhina 2019; Voronkov 2014; Voronkov and Smirnova 2017).

As for a potential Russia's presidential agenda President Vladimir Putin was the first who tried to identify its main priorities. At the 5th International Arctic Forum "The Arctic – a Territory of Dialogue" in St. Petersburg (9 April 2019) he noted: "Priorities for our chairmanship include vitally important themes for the Arctic development: the development of environmentally safe technologies in the spheres, such as industry, transport and energy" (International Arctic Forum 2019).

One month later, at the 11th AC Ministerial Meeting (Rovaniemi, May 7, 2019) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, on the hand, emphasized Moscow's intention to ensure continuity between the Icelandic and Russian presidencies: "We will ensure the continuity of the general Arctic agenda when the council chairmanship is transferred to Russia in 2021. We will pursue the implementation of all the initiatives originated under Reykjavik's chairmanship" (Lavrov 2019).

On the other hand, Lavrov explained what specific priorities are planned for the Russian presidency agenda for 2021-2023:

- sustainable socioeconomic development of the Arctic region on the basis of environmentally clean technologies;
- development of renewable sources of energy;
- promoting a circular economy;
- environment protection;
- climate change mitigation;
- social cohesiveness and connectivity in the region;
- improving the well-being of the people living in the Arctic, especially the indigenous peoples, preserving their languages, cultures and traditions;
- science diplomacy;
- joint educational projects, including further support for the University of the Arctic (Lavrov 2019).

It should be noted, however, that the Russian AC presidency agenda is still a work in progress: its details are being specified and priorities can be changed depending on the

internal situation in the Council and international environment (especially after the 2020 U.S. presidential elections).

Rather lively discussions take place both in the Russian and foreign expert communities regarding the possible AC institutional reform under the Russian chairmanship. The moderate versions of these speculations suggest certain changes, including:

- Improvement of coordination of the Council's structural elements and implementation process.
- Better coordination of the AC activities with other regional and subregional institutions (Arctic Economic Council, Arctic Coast Guard Forum, BEAC, Nordic institutions, Northern Regional Forum, etc.).
- Streamlining the secretariat system. Perhaps Moscow will try to implement David Balton's (former U.S. SAO and Senior Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center's Polar Institute) proposals which boil down to the idea of subordinating working groups' and task forces' secretariats to the Council's permanent secretariat (Balton 2019). This plan, however, can provoke resistance not only from AC working groups and task forces but also from some SAOs who dislike the idea of making the Council's secretarial system more centralized because it could make the AC too bureaucratic (such accusations have been already made by some permanent participants, observers and international NGOs).
- As Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov promised, under the Russian presidency the work on the Council's Strategic Plan will be continued because the Finnish presidency failed to finalize this project and the Icelandic one seemingly has no this issue on its priority list. The debate both in the Russian and international expert communities as regards the nature of this document still continues. Perhaps, as some experts suggest (Kuznetsov 2018), the AC could use other regional and subregional institutions' experiences, such as, for example, the 2017 Council of the Baltic Sea States' "Baltic 2030 Action Plan" which outlined a rather impressive cooperative agenda for the region based on the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals. Probably a similar AC Strategic Plan could provide for better coordination of the AC activities not only with other regional institutions but also with the UN bodies dealing with the Arctic and make the Council a real focal point of Arctic cooperation and regional governance system.
- Making the role of permanent participants and observers more visible. As Foreign Minister Lavrov underlined in his 2019 Rovaniemi statement: "We are interested in an effective, value-added mainstreaming of observers into the Arctic Council's activities. This status carries much responsibility" (Lavrov 2019). As mentioned above, he was very

positive about the 2018 SAO separate session with observers, where they presented measures undertaken to fight pollution in the Arctic and maintain its biodiversity. He promised to continue the practice of a more active involvement of permanent participants and observers not only to the working groups' and task forces' activities but also to the work of other AC units and structures.

- Some AC budget reform can be expected under the Russian presidency as well. Foreign Minister Lavrov (2019) has already promised to continue and further expand the AC Project Support Instrument where Russia is the major donor since this institution's very inception (Voronchikhina 2019: 313, 317). Further AC budget's centralization, streamlining and increasing transparency are possible as well.

Some experts suggest a more radical version of the Council's institutional reform. For example, an international team of WWF (Dubois et al. 2016) proposed to distinguish between three type of the AC bodies:

- Knowledge-related bodies: working groups, task forces, expert groups and Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs). This group would be responsible for conducting all assessments, coordinating early warning work (identifying new and emerging issues), producing technical reports, coordinating science and research agendas, and ensuring use of traditional knowledge for co-production of new knowledge coming through the AC.
- Policy-related bodies: SAO and ministerial meetings. This group would develop and recommend policy options and actions based on the scientific assessments/reports and scientific recommendations submitted by the knowledge bodies.
- A newly created implementation body would consider decisions and recommendations as provided by ministers and operationalize them through developing general implementation plans. These plans would guide joint implementation through the Council and include clear timelines and measures to guide and support Arctic states in developing national implementation plans. The standards for implementation established by this body would constitute the benchmarks against which the effectiveness of national or other actions regarding implementation would be measured and reported on.

These experts believe that possible structural changes could strengthen the AC role in asserting regional stewardship by responding to the challenges of a rapidly changing Arctic and the increasingly more integrated policy frameworks from local to global scales. The problem is, however, whether the forthcoming Russian presidency would have

enough authority and resources to implement such a radical institutional reform of the Council.

Conclusions

Several conclusions emerge from the above analysis:

From the very beginning, Russia was involved in both the creation and further development of the Arctic Council. Moscow was one of the initiators of the Rovaniemi process/AEPS and establishing the Council. Similar to other Arctic countries, in the early period of the AC activities, Russia has considerably contributed to developing rules of procedure and mandates for the Council's various organs, as well as incorporating the work of the AEPS into the AC activities.

However, there were ups and downs in Russia's activities in the framework of the Council. For example, during the U.S., Finnish and Icelandic presidencies (1998-2004) Moscow paid more attention to its own socioeconomic and ecological problems in the AZRF rather than to the pan-Arctic agenda. Since its first presidency (2004-2006) Russia became more involved in the Council's region-scale activities. Since 2011, when the Project Support Instrument was created, Russia (along with Canada) became its main financial donor.

Russia was one of the initiators and active negotiators of all three binding agreements (SAR, oil spills prevention, science cooperation) concluded under the AC auspices. Moscow supported all major Council's endeavors in areas, such as sustainable development, energy security, environment protection, climate change mitigation, conservation of biodiversity, maritime safety, connectivity of Arctic regions, telecommunications, sustainable fisheries, well-being of local communities (including indigenous peoples) and so on. Russia favored further Council's institutionalization and strengthening its role in the regional governance system.

At the same time, there were serious changes in Russia's thinking about the AC in the post-Ukrainian era. Moscow does not want any more to transform the Council into a full-fledged international organization preferring to keep the AC as an informal and flexible intergovernmental mechanism which is better designed for difficult times than 'classical' international organizations. Russia has also abandoned its previous plans to bring hard

(military) security problematique onto the Council's agenda and currently it favors retaining the AC's competencies only in the soft security sphere.

As regards Russia's forthcoming AC presidency program, on the one hand, it will ensure continuity of the Finnish and Icelandic agendas and, on the other hand, it will focus on sustainable development of the Arctic region based on the use of environmentally safe technologies. Moscow will try to finalize the development of the Council's Strategic Plan and streamlining the AC's organizational structure. At the same time, it is unlikely that the Russian chairmanship will initiate any radical institutional reforms.

In general, Russia will likely use its AC presidency both to promote its national interests in the High North and increase the Council's role in an emerging regional governance system.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Polar Cooperation Research Center, Kobe University, ERA.Net RUS Plus/Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR) project no. 18-55-76003 and RFBR project no. 20-514-22001.

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Table 1. The number of delegates from the member states to attend the Council's meetings.

Year	Country, number of delegates							
	Russia	Norway	U.S.	Canada	Finland	Denmark	Sweden	Iceland
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>
1998	6	10	7	16	9	9	5	4
1999	3	6	43	19	3	7	2	2
2000	5	7	33	23	6	8	2	1
2001	5	9	12	15	17	8	4	4
2002	3	6	19	16	14	6	3	3
2003	2	8	13	18	6	4	3	5
2004	5	11	13	17	3	5	3	4
2005	-	6	7	9	5	2	3	1
2006	-	24	17	11	14	12	12	5
2007	8	21	14	16	5	8	5	1
2008	7	15	10	8	2	4	4	1
2009	5	5	5	3	1	10	6	1
2010	6	18	9	10	3	10	3	2
March 2011	10	24	12	13	5	11	9	3
Nov. 2011	5	9	6	11	5	5	16	2
2012	6	9	10	10	5	8	9	2
2013	3	3	4	8	3	6	4	3
2014	1	5	4	12	3	5	3	2
2015	1	4	10	7	2	4	3	2
March 2016	1	5	10	8	3	8	7	3
Oct. 2016	1	7	7	9	7	6	6	3
March 2017	1	5	9	8	4	7	4	4
May 2017	12	12	12	10	12	12	10	7
March 2018	2	6	6	5	7	4	3	4
Nov. 2018	2	5	6	7	7	4	4	4

Source: Voronchikhina 2019: 310.

Table 2. The number of comments made by the representatives of the Russian Federation in the Council's meetings

Year	Number of comments
1998	0
1999	11
2000	35
2001	10
2002	6
2003	3
2004	16
2005	12
2006	9
2007	8
2008	10
2009	8
2010	12
2011	7
2012	5
2013	4
2014	3
2015	4
2016	7
2017	9
2018	7

Source: Voronchikhina 2019: 318.

Table 3. The number of projects funded by the Council member countries.

Year	Country, number of projects							
	Russia	Norway	U.S.	Canada	Finland	Denmark	Sweden	Iceland
1996-1998	2	3	3	2	4	2	2	5
1998-2000	4	6	4	6	5	5	4	4
2000-2002	0	2	2	2	2	4	1	1
2002-2004	1	2	2	3	2	2	1	3
2004-2006	6	3	2	3	3	2	2	3
2006-2009	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
2009-2011	4	3	3	3	2	2	3	2
2011-2013	1	1	1	1	2	0	3	1
2013-2015	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1
2015-2017	6	4	3	4	3	3	4	3
2018-2019	No data							
Total	25	24	21	25	24	20	21	23

Source: Voronchikhina 2019: 311.

Table 4. The number of projects sponsored by Russia

Years	Number of projects
1996-1998	1
1998-2000	3
2000-2002	7
2002-2004	11
2004-2006	23
2006-2009	3
2009-2011	6
2011-2013	6
2013-2015	8
2015-2017	4
2018-2019	No data
Total	72

Source: Voronchikhina 2019: 314-315.